

Radlett Preparatory School

Kendal Hall, Watling Street, Radlett, WD7 7LY

Inspection dates 18–20 June 2013

Overall effectiveness	Good	2
Pupils' achievement	Good	2
Pupils' behaviour and personal development	Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching	Good	2
Quality of curriculum	Good	2
Pupils' welfare, health and safety	Outstanding	1
Leadership and management	Good	2

Summary of key findings

This school is good because

- The quality of teaching and learning is good. The knowledge teachers have of their subjects is excellent. The emphasis they place on teaching literacy and numeracy skills is a particular strength. As a result, pupils achieve well in relation to their starting points.
- Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. Pupils are exceptionally courteous and supportive of each other, regardless of their ability or background. Their concentration and diligence are exemplary.
- Pupils follow a rich curriculum that effectively meets their academic and personal needs. The many opportunities pupils have for exciting extra-curricular activities are outstanding.
- The school is well led and managed. Senior leaders are highly committed to the success of the school. They know what they need to do to improve the school further. They are constantly seeking to ensure a good balance between high achievement and exemplary welfare for all pupils.
- The first-class quality of welfare, safety and care, together with the excellent relationships the school promotes, contribute significantly to the outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils.

It is not yet outstanding because

- Some lessons are not as effective as they should be. Not all teachers use skilful questioning to help pupils understand their work, particularly pupils who have additional needs.
- Subject leaders are not sufficiently involved in improving the quality of teaching. The excellent practice that exists in the school is not shared widely enough.
- Planning for the training of teachers is not robust enough.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets schedule 1 of The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, as amended by The Education (Independent School Standards) (England)

(Amendment) Regulations 2012 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out with one day’s notice.
- Inspectors observed 27 lessons taught by 26 teachers, listened to pupils read and looked at their books. Inspectors conducted some joint observations of teaching with members of the senior management team. Discussions were held with pupils and staff.
- Inspectors looked at the school’s documentation, including schemes of work, teachers’ planning, and assessment.
- Inspectors took account of the views expressed by 82 parents and carers on Ofsted’s online parental questionnaire (Parent View), and 27 staff questionnaires. Inspectors considered the views of 227 pupils who completed the Ofsted’s online Point-in-Time survey in the Autumn Term 2012.

Inspection team

Marianick Ellender-Gelé, Lead inspector	Her Majesty’s Inspector
John Gush	Additional Inspector
Christine Murrell	Additional Inspector
Michael Thirkell	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is an independent co-educational day school in Radlett, Hertfordshire. A significant minority of pupils come from a wide range of different cultural backgrounds.
- The school aims to provide 'an excellent, balanced education. Children are encouraged to realise their potential abilities and to learn to respect each other, to be well mannered, morally upright and to be an active member of a happy, supportive school community'.
- The school admits pupils aged from four to 11 years. There are currently 472 pupils on roll. No pupil has a statement of special educational needs but there are some pupils who have been identified as needing additional support.
- The school was established in the 1930s and last inspected in 2009. The Principal is retiring and a new substantive Principal will take up post in September 2013.
- The school does not use any additional provision to support pupils' learning.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that all lessons match the standards of the best by:
 - ensuring that staff receive effective training
 - reviewing the quality and impact of the support for pupils who require additional help.
- Improve the management of staff performance by:
 - engaging subject leaders in evaluating the quality of teaching in their subjects
 - formalising lesson observations so that feedback to teachers explains exactly what they need to do to make all lessons at least good
 - sharing the excellent practice that already exists in the school
 - agreeing clear targets to make more teaching outstanding.

Inspection judgements

Pupils' achievement

Good

Pupils' achievement is good. Almost all pupils make good progress in their learning during their time at the school. Consequently, by the time they reach Year 6, pupils' attainment in reading, grammar, writing and mathematics is above their peers nationally. Many pupils are successful in entrance examinations to secure places at a selective secondary school of their choice. Children enter Reception with above average levels of communication and social skills. They make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The effective planning of activities ensures the right combination of adult-led activities and free play. This is a significant improvement since the 2009 inspection when provision was judged satisfactory. It is now good.

Pupils make good progress regardless of their cultural background. More-able pupils are challenged and, consequently, they do well. A high proportion of parents and carers are pleased with their children's progress. However, achievement is not yet outstanding. This is because, where teaching is less effective, pupils who have additional needs receive insufficient help. Gaps in their knowledge are not identified rapidly enough and this slows their rate of progress.

Following the 2009 inspection, the school placed increased emphasis on improving pupils' literacy skills, and, in particular, the quality and breadth of their writing. This work has been successful. The standard of pupils' writing is consistently above average, with some of particularly high quality. Across the school, pupils demonstrate good standards in writing for different audiences and purposes. Scrutiny of work shows that, over time, punctuation, grammar and spelling become increasingly accurate. The focus on frequent reading is also reaping benefits. In Reception, children are beginning to match words with sounds they know, and older pupils read widely from a broad range of texts. Numeracy skills are taught well. Mental arithmetic is given much attention and pupils tackle challenging mathematical problems with confidence. The many extra-curricular opportunities, in particular the chess and journalism clubs, contribute brilliantly to the good progress that pupils make in a range of skills.

Pupils make good progress across the full range of subjects. For example, during the sports day events, inspectors saw high standards in physical education. Pupils respond well to practical activities and show good levels of performance in drama and music. Pupils are mature users of information and communication technology (ICT).

Pupils' behaviour and personal development

Outstanding

Pupils' behaviour and personal development are outstanding. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is also outstanding. Pupils say they are very happy at school and all feel that it is a very friendly place. Relationships between adults and pupils, and between all pupils regardless of age, gender or cultural background, are excellent. Those who spoke to inspectors said that they feel very safe and that, when they are concerned about rare incidents of bullying, there is always a member of staff they can go to for help. From a very young age, pupils understand right from wrong. The matron is exemplary in her care and understanding of pupils' welfare and emotional needs.

Attendance and punctuality are excellent. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is outstanding. Pupils have many opportunities to perform in front of others, for example in drama and choir rehearsals, and in lessons where they were observed explaining complex work to the whole class with clarity and confidence. Their self-esteem is often boosted by teachers' encouragement and tactful correction when this is necessary to improve learning. Boys and girls

are keen to take on responsibility, for example by helping younger pupils or taking on duties at break and lunchtime. Pupils play a productive part in the community through visits to local homes for the elderly, and by fundraising for local and national charities. They have a good knowledge of public institutions and services in England. The well-planned citizenship programme contributes to this and ensures that pupils learn about many aspects of British and other cultures. Staff take reasonable steps to ensure that partisan political views are not promoted in the teaching of any subject in school.

Quality of teaching

Good

The quality of teaching is good and promotes good achievement over time. Some features of teaching are outstanding, in particular the high levels of knowledge teachers have of their subject and the emphasis they place on developing all aspects of literacy and numeracy skills. The relationships they develop with their classes are excellent. In Reception, children's starting points are accurately identified and work is planned so that all progress well. Children engage readily in a wide range of interesting activities and behave very well. The outdoor area has recently been improved and it is increasingly being used to good effect. For example, a wild zone is being developed to enable children to explore and develop their imagination.

In all year groups, teachers match the work to the needs of most pupils. However, where teaching is less effective, the use of questioning is not sufficiently targeted to help pupils who require additional help. In a few cases, the specific needs of these pupils are not identified early enough and gaps in their knowledge impede progress. In the very small number of weaker lessons, there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to work together and learn from one another. In the best lessons, teachers use their subject knowledge very well to challenge all pupils and stimulate their curiosity. This was demonstrated extremely well in a science lesson where the teacher used a wide range of resources and effective methods to probe pupils' understanding and extend their learning. The teaching of reading is given a high priority. Teachers demonstrate high levels of skill and question pupils very effectively when listening to them read. Consequently, all pupils make good progress in this skill. The use of ICT as a tool for teaching has improved since the 2009 inspection and it is now good. Some teachers require training as they still lack confidence, particularly in the use of electronic whiteboards to support pupils' learning.

The assessment of pupils' work is frequent. Teachers ensure that most pupils know what to do to improve their work. Pupils who find some of the work difficult do not always receive precise feedback. However, in the main, teachers mark the work assiduously. Detailed comments on pupils' written work highlight mistakes, and encourage pupils to reflect on their errors and do corrections.

Quality of curriculum

Good

The quality of the curriculum is good. The provision of extra-curricular activities is excellent. Detailed schemes of work ensure that pupils make good progress in their reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils are frequently heard to read and improvement in this skill is rapid. Pupils follow a broad and balanced timetable. The breadth of subjects prepares them well for transfer to secondary schools as it includes a wide range of sports, modern foreign languages and the performing arts. The curriculum is not yet outstanding because provision for modern foreign languages does not lead to sufficiently high standards and short-term lesson planning for pupils with additional needs is not consistently effective.

The extensive range of educational visits and residential experiences contribute effectively to pupils' personal and academic development. For example, the Year 6 visit to the Isle of Wight enables pupils to learn about its history, ecology and specific economical characteristics. Pupils

have access to instrumental tuition during the school day and this helps them to develop their musical talents. The citizenship programme covers personal, social and health education very well. Pupils study major world religions and learn about life in other countries. The curriculum places the right emphasis on personal development and safety. Through the ICT curriculum, pupils learn about keeping themselves safe when using computers and learn about the risks of social networks. Assemblies provide good opportunities to celebrate achievement and help pupils to think about their feelings and those of others.

Pupils' welfare, health and safety

Outstanding

The school's provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety is outstanding. All statutory requirements are met. The school has systematically devised and very effectively implements a good range of policies and procedures, including those required for anti-bullying, risk assessments and safeguarding children. The designated child protection officer has completed the required higher-level training and staff are fully aware of safeguarding procedures. All the required checks are carried out to ensure the suitability of staff and other adults to work with children, and this information is held on a well-maintained single central register. The staff handbook includes clear guidelines on all school matters relating to pupils' welfare, health and safety, and these are implemented consistently by all staff. Risk assessments and fire procedures are good. The building is generally well maintained. Pupils are supervised extremely well and they say they feel very safe in school.

Leadership and management

Good

Leadership and management are good. The Principal, vice-principal, senior leaders and staff are highly committed to ensuring that pupils receive a good education to achieve well. All the independent school standards are met, including publishing the safeguarding policy on the website. Pupils are valued and well cared for. The Principal and vice-principal have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The improvement plan shows that actions are in place to tackle deficiencies, external reviews are welcomed and good progress has been made on rectifying the weaknesses identified in the 2009 inspection. The senior management team evaluate the quality of teaching, but subject leaders are not contributing enough to this process. Consequently, lesson observations are not sufficiently frequent and shortcomings in some lessons are not remedied quickly enough. Peer observation of teaching to share excellent practice is underdeveloped. Staff morale is good and, through the inspection questionnaires, staff confirmed that they enjoy working at the school. Occasional negative comments were made on aspects of school management and the limited opportunities for training. Inspectors agree that training to support pupils with additional needs and make even better use of ICT require improvement. Inspectors found no evidence of weak management.

The premises and accommodation comply with all requirements. The senior management team is seeking to improve communication with all parents and carers and improvement to the website is in hand. The very large majority of parents and carers are supportive of the school. However, a small minority indicated on Parent View that the school does not always respond well to complaints, that information on their children's progress is insufficient and that their children's additional learning needs are not always dealt with. Inspectors found that reports sent to parents and carers are detailed and opportunities are provided for parents and carers to meet teachers and discuss pupils' learning. The inspection confirms that more work is required to meet the additional needs of some pupils. Inspectors did not find evidence to endorse the comments regarding responses to complaints. These are dealt with appropriately. The complaints procedure meets requirements and is properly implemented, and all the required information about the school is accessible on the website.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	A school which provides an exceptional quality of education and significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 2	Good	A school which provides a high quality of education that exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 3	Adequate	A school which meets minimum requirements but needs to improve the quality of education it provides.
Grade 4	Inadequate	A school where minimum requirements are not met and/or the quality of education has serious weaknesses.

School details

Unique reference number	117615
Inspection number	408762
DfE registration number	919/6034

This inspection was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Type of school	Co-educational Day School
School status	Independent School
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	472
Number of part time pupils	0
Proprietor	Wayne Warren
Chair	Wayne Warren (Principal)
Headteacher	Simon Rundle
Date of previous school inspection	December 2009
Annual fees (day pupils)	£8,100
Telephone number	01923 856812
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